

## Frequently Asked Questions for Residential Building Projects



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[1.](#) A building setback is the required distance that a building (structure) must be located from the property lines of the adjacent property. The setbacks are determined by the appropriate zoning jurisdiction and based on the zoning district. Charlotte customers may call 704-336-7600 to process a request for a zoning setback determination. For customers outside Charlotte jurisdiction, please contact the appropriate town's planning department.

[2.](#) The state of North Carolina allows you to build your own home provided you personally will reside in the home and that it is not for rent or intended for sale within one year after you complete all construction. You will have to be bonded with Mecklenburg County and you will have to pass a special homeowner's code test in electrical, mechanical and plumbing for residential construction. This will allow you to apply for all permits and schedule inspections. All work must meet the current NC code requirements and pass inspection by a state certified county inspector before utilities can be accessed and a certificate of occupancy issued. You must personally do the work. You can hire helpers to work under your direct supervision.

As an option, you could choose to be the general contractor and hire all the sub-contractors to work for you. You could pull the building permit and list each

licensed contractor on your permit. They would call in their own inspections but you would be responsible for all work.

3. Yes you can but it will need a full, masonry foundation built underneath it with a continuous concrete footing. Most decks are built using wood posts on individual footings. When a deck is converted to a sunroom the windows and the roof create additional wind loads on the room which must be supported by a full foundation. The only alternative to this would be to have a NC licensed engineer design a post or pier foundation that would support the additional loading.

A building permit and an electrical permit is required for this and the floor, walls and roof will have to be insulated. If the exterior door leading to this sunroom is removed, a licensed mechanical contractor will have to provide heat to the sunroom.

4. A footing in Mecklenburg County must be at least 12 inches below grade, that is, the bottom of the concrete must be 12 inches below the surface. This must be inspected before any concrete is placed. If the soil is soft or not compacted well enough the usual solution is to dig deeper until you hit good hard dirt.

5. A storage shed or an accessory building will need a building permit if any dimension is greater than 12 feet. It will also require a zoning permit. If the building is less than 12 feet, it will not need a building permit but it will still need a zoning permit. Call zoning at 704-336-3819

6. Generally, residential plans do not require a seal from an architect or engineer. However, when the plans contain structural elements exceeding the limits of the NC Residential Code, or otherwise not conforming to this code, these elements shall be designed in accordance with accepted engineering practice. This portion of the plan must be sealed by an architect or engineer. In other words, if it is not described in the code book it will need a seal. Examples of this would be truss roof or floor systems, engineered wood beams like LVL or steel beams, unusual foundations or retaining walls, unusual construction methods like log homes or timber framed structures.

7. Windows in hazardous locations require safety glazing which is usually tempered glass in residential construction. The code book describes 9 locations considered hazardous. Generally it would be: glass in doors, a window within 2 feet of a door in the same wall plane, a window less than 18 inches to the floor with a single pane more than 9 square feet, any glass around a pool, hot tub, shower etc., windows near a stairway, railing or a landing, all of these locations would require tempered or other type of safety glazing.

8. It is possible to finish a room in the basement or the attic if it can be done in conformance with the current NC residential codes. It would require a building permit and an electrical, mechanical and plumbing permit if there is plumbing involved. A plan review is not required if the total cost is less than \$175,000. If the project is adding a second or third story to the house a NC licensed engineer would have to inspect the foundation for soundness and its ability to carry the

added load. There are egress, headroom and stair requirements also. Call RTAC for further details, 704-432-7822

[9.](#) An outdoor range in a screened in porch is allowed if the range is rated for outdoor use and it has an exhaust hood and vent specified by the range manufacturer for use outdoors. The "rating" is only assigned to products which have been tested by an approved testing agency like UL or Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. for this type application. If this were a gas range, 2 permits would be required, electrical and mechanical.

[10.](#) The maximum rise or step height in NC is 8 1/4 inches. There is no minimum. The minimum tread depth is 9 inches with a 3/4 inch nosing. There is no maximum tread depth. A nosing is not required where the tread depth is a minimum of 11 inches.

[11.](#) In Mecklenburg County the insulation requirements are: R-19 in a floor above a crawl space or garage, R-13 in the exterior walls and R-30 in the attic. If there is a full basement and the area is heated or conditioned space the basement walls from the top of the foundation down 10 feet or to the floor would be insulated to R-7. The thickness of the insulation varies depending on what it consists of.

[12.](#) You can add on to your house if there is enough room in your yard and the addition meets the current NC building codes. Call zoning at 704-336-3819 for information regarding setbacks and space requirements for the addition. Building plans, 2 copies, must be submitted for review along with the building permit and plot plan.